

STATE OF KANSAS

JIM KELLY

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TOPEKA

HOUSE OF
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Senate Committee on Assessment and Taxation
Oral Proponent Testimony in Support of
SB 187- Extending the Rural Opportunity Zone Program
Tuesday, February 17, 2015

I appear before you this morning as a proponent Senate Bill 187, the continuation of the Kansas Rural Opportunity Zone program that has proven key in helping many of the 77 participating rural Kansas counties begin to reverse the loss of population they have experienced for over 4 decades. Since joining the program in July of 2014, my 11th District, in Montgomery County, leads the state in applications from new residents. This is certainly a very positive sign for improving the long term viability of a county that experienced two major setbacks in 2014 that led to the loss of many jobs.

Only weeks after becoming eligible for the program a major Montgomery County employer used the Rural Opportunity Zone incentives to attract the candidate they wanted for a key position in their local plant from a sister corporation in another state. The individual they were replacing had chosen to live in Oklahoma when she accepted the position; the new position holder is now living in Montgomery County thanks to the Rural Opportunity Zone program.

As a Representative from a new ROZ County I have seen this program immediately generate the results that is was intended to produce. Again, I am a proponent of SB 187 and urge the continuation of the Rural Opportunity Program. However, I do propose your consideration of eliminating the 6 year sunset proposed in the bill. Making ROZ a permanent program will give the 77 participating counties a permanent tool that they can use, on a continuing basis, to promote living in rural Kansas.

Jim Kelly
District 11